

Executive Summary

In April of 2005, the Transportation Planning Branch of the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) and Polk County made an agreement to begin work on the Polk County Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP). The resulting plan, as shown in Figure 2 of this report, is the end product of the planning process. The recommendations shown in this plan are based on technical analysis of transportation needs, application of standard transportation planning principles, and input from local officials and the public.

It is important to note that the recommended transportation plan is based upon anticipated growth and development within the planning area over the next 25 years. Prior to the construction of specific recommended projects, a more detailed study will be required to reconsider development trends, determine specific design requirements, and further evaluate environmental impacts. Over time, as development patterns change, it may also become necessary to update this Comprehensive Transportation Plan.

The Comprehensive Transportation Plan for Polk County currently includes recommendations for three transportation elements: highways, public transportation and rail, and bicycles. The format for the pedestrian map has not been finalized, so it is not included as part of the adopted Comprehensive Transportation Plan.

The projected population and employment growth within the planning area is based on the regional economic analysis that was performed during the development of the Polk County CTP. A working committee formed from local officials approved subarea - level population data for the County. Technical analysis for the highway element was performed using the STEP UP (Simple Traffic Estimation Procedure Using Population) tool.

Recommendations in all transportation elements were developed to reflect the overall goals of the area, based on discussions with local planners and the public. This report documents the findings of this study as well as the resulting recommendations for improvements.

After ongoing coordination with the Isothermal Rural Planning Organization (IRPO), the planning departments for the County, Town of Columbus, City of Saluda, and Town of Tryon, and several public involvement sessions in 2006, 2007, and 2008, the Polk County Comprehensive Transportation Plan was adopted by the Town of Columbus on March 20, 2008, City of Saluda on April 14, 2008, Town of Tryon on May 20, 2008, and Polk County on July 21, 2008. The Isothermal Rural Planning Organization (RPO) endorsed the plan on August 28, 2008. The plan was adopted by NCDOT on October 2, 2008. Implementation of this plan rests largely with the policy boards and citizens of